



Valentene in Galilee

Poems from the
Promised Land

Valentene Rice

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Published by Valentene Rice, 2024.

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VALENTENE IN GALILEE

First edition. July 26, 2024.

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ISBN: 978-1965135006

Written by Valentene Rice.

This book is dedicated to Tara, Tara, Sara, Mom and Corinne.

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1. The Shores Of The Sea Of Galilee

On a breezy afternoon in Kafar Nahum, a town on the northern shore of the Sea of Galilee, the teacher finishes speaking to his disciples and some fishermen standing around with their families, tending to their nets after a long night of fishing. The teacher speaks to the people in a poetic voice, touching their hearts, minds and souls.

A voice calls out, disturbing the Shalom, interrupting the peacefulness of this moment. It is the commanding voice of a Roman centurion telling the teacher to come, then instructing him to pick up his military equipment and carry it up the side of this hill for the required distance of a mile. A mile, a kilometer, it doesn't matter, carrying his equipment and bags up the side of this hill is hard work for anyone on a hot day, even a cool breezy day in warm sun.

The disciples of the teacher respond to the centurion, "I'll carry your things, sir" and another "Please sir, let me?". The voice, even more demanding than before, says, "No, not you, the Jew with the poetry there!" The teacher says to his disciples, "He wants me to carry his things, and I am glad to do so".

The centurion says, "We'll see how glad you are at the end of that distance on the top of this hill." The teacher picks up the equipment and the bags and follows the centurion as they begin the steep climb up the hill towards the centurion post at the top of the hills of the north shore on this extremely warm day.

At the completion of the required distance, the centurion says, "Now you can go, your service is complete". The centurion looks at the teacher without a word of gratitude, as Romans have contempt for Jewish people.

The teacher then asks, "May I carry your things another distance? You have released me from your service, but I would like to carry your things a second distance, please." The centurion looks at the Jewish man standing there sweating, and with only the safety of his own possessions in mind, and perhaps with even more disregard for this Jewish teacher, he

says, "Yes, you can carry it another distance, but don't you dare drop anything! Now, let's go."

At the end of the second distance, and looking back down the hill at many of the people still waiting for the teacher to return, the teacher says, "Thank you, Shalom, peace be with you." The centurion says, "Go on." Then he turns and calls for another person to come and assume the task for the next required distance, to carry the centurion's equipment and bags.

The teacher walks back down the hill, perhaps stopping for a sip of water, when he sees his disciples coming towards him. The disciples are still alarmed that the centurion would not take one of them to do the work and instead insisted upon their Master, their teacher, their rabbi. The disciples ask their teacher, "Master, please tell us what to do in situations like this." The teacher says, "If someone requires you to walk one distance, walk a second as well." His disciples respond, "But Master, he acted contemptuously with you, there was no reason one of us could not have carried his things. He wanted to humiliate you in front of us and the people gathered to hear you in the village today!"

The teacher says to them, "Pray for those who spitefully use you." The disciples, full of emotion, say, "You want us to pray for people who make themselves our enemy, who hate us?" The teacher replies, "Show love to those who are your enemy, as you would love your own soul." The disciples then say, "We understand, love our neighbor as ourselves. Our neighbor is Jewish, just as we are, but the Romans hate us, and you want us to carry their equipment and bags an extra, second distance after the initial required distance? Those who spitefully use us? You want us to love them as we love our own soul!? You want us to pray for those who hate us, and treat us with disrespect in front of our wives, children and our neighbors? Those who are also Jewish and suffer the same as we do?" The teacher, now able to catch his breath after the laborious work, says, "Yes, pray for them as you would your neighbor and love them as you would your very soul."

To many, these words about the Romans would have been too much and this could have lead some of them to leave.

The Children of Israel know it is their responsibility to share the Light of the Creator with the Nations of the world, and the importance of keeping the Name of the Creator sanctified.

For the Children of Israel to love God with all of their body, soul and might, and love their neighbor as themselves. Although to some this is the greatest of commandments, it is not the easiest. Especially when people of the Nations reject the Light of the Creator and seek to destroy the sacred Teaching and its authors, the People of the Book.

2. Merit Of The Tzadek

The Teacher rises early as he has every day, to meditate and pray.

Continuing the journey to the other side.

“Master”, called his disciples, “shall we begin?”

Each man lay the Tifillin.

The Teacher’s voice amplified by the wind as it travels across the ripples of the waters on the Kenneret and into the epochs of time.

“Shma”, his words are echoed, “Israel”, “Adonai”, “Ahad.”

As all call out to God.

“Va-Ahaftah”, “and we shall love the Father, with all our heart, soul and might.”

“God of Abraham, Issac, and Yacov.”

“Blessed is the mighty One

who keeps faith with their children’s children, beloved, who sleep in the dust.”

The wind blows, Ru’ach moves across the water.

Each one hears the sound of the name Shadai as he enters deeper into this moment which transcends this place.

To each it is a sign.

The Spirit of the Holy One dwells among you, of Whom you are a child. Generations later, they hear their Rabbi’s voice in their hearts, and he remains alive.

Do not forget I am with you, until the end of time.

In these things, they remember their Teacher, the Tzadek.

All eyes were upon their Teacher, as morning prayers reached their end.

That fateful moment when the Master said, “Now is the acceptable time. We go to Jerusalem.”

No one will forget that Spring day of 3790.

Within an hour they were on their way.

“How can we sing songs of Zion, when the expectation of loss fills the air?”

For the Master had spoken of what would happen in the days ahead, to the son of man.

“Do not let your hearts be filled with sorrow, know this is the Father’s plan.”

Two of his disciples walking closest to him, whispered, “Please Master, help us understand.”

He turned to look at them and said, “A seed must fall into the earth for a tree to sprout, before it bears fruit.

The Tzadek, who deserves no judgement, must yet suffer for the merit to be shared in Olam Ha’Ba.”

They ask, “But what good is it in the World-To-Come, when our teacher is taken away?”

He lovingly responds, “I know it’s difficult to comprehend right now, but some day you will understand.”

The group continued walking and wondering, questioning the words he said.

Two more days to Jerusalem lay ahead.

Two weeks later, all that the master had spoken had come to pass.

His disciples ran away like frightened children to avoid sharing their teacher’s judgement.

Tears, screams, tearing their clothes, seven days they sat in mourning, wondering,

“How could this happen to me?”

They asked themselves, “Why, for what?”

“Please God, help us to see!”

Then the voice of the Teacher’s brother could be heard above the rest.

“Brothers, don’t you see?

As his teacher before him, our teacher, a righteous man indeed, in whom the evil inclination did not dominate, in whose words, there was no evil found.

The Tzadek has taken upon himself and received, an undeserved sentence, as an innocent man.

He did this to share a place in the World-to-Come, merit that, for some, was lacking.

So all those who connected with him as their rabbi can also share in the Olam Ha'Ba.

This is the Merit of the Tzadek.

Do not forget what we have heard and seen.

He has given his disciples a gift, to partake from On-High."

After the Mourner's Prayer, when it was finished, all agreed.

They said "Amen" and left for Galilee.

3. A Message From Galilee

In the year of 3790.

The place was Galilee, Israel.

The Teacher stood before his disciples and told them, The end of our time is near.

All the words of the Prophets, those whom we revere, have visualized and prophesied events which now seem clear.

The hour has come.

You are the chosen by our Father to continue the vision.

Soon everyone will see.

Right now, it's just you and me.

There's a healing which must occur.

It begins in the soul, then the heart will sing its song.

As you carry forth the Message from Galilee.

Live in the spirit of Moshiach!

As we find ourselves in the right place to see the Kingdom of Heaven.

4. The Power Within You

They had allegiance to their Rabbi, he was the voice of the Word.
He shared the Light of the Spirit of God, and gave them instructions to
get them to the other side.
He said, The Power is within you, to master the instinct of evil.
To rise above sin, and walk the path of the holy One.
Go out and teach the Nations, to every generation!
Live as righteous ones, and I'll see you again at the end of days.
The journey has just begun, so keep your faith alive.
Our Father is always with you.
Try not to be afraid. I have shown you the way!
Forever you are my people.
Stand quietly, meditate on these words when you pray.
Stay aligned with the Holy One, and know the power within you.

5. The Rest Of The Teacher's Story

There is far more to know about the Teacher's story, than many might even believe, but the way is clear, if you are interested.

It's been here all the time, waiting for you to see.

If you want to know the rest of the Teacher's story, then first, it would be helpful to see, he lived a few miles away, just over the hill, near the Sea of Galilee.

He was Jewish, and he said the same prayers as are prayed today.

He meditated on the Holy Word and wrapped Tefillin as a sign on his arm and head, just like the rest of the greatest Commandment said.

If you want to know the rest of the Teacher's story, then go, as he said, to Galilee.

Here you will find, praying or having coffee, the rest of his family.

Although more modern Jewish, while he was extremely observant, from the first century.

If you want to know the rest of the Teacher's story, then listen to the words of the Tzadek.

The prayers he prayed, you can pray, including the ones he taught you.

Love God with all your heart, love you neighbor as you hopefully love yourself, and you will begin to know the rest of the Teacher's story.

6. Go To Galilee

Go to Galilee, be part of nature. Explore the spiritual practice of drawing near to the the Holy One.

Strengthening that connection, with a song in your heart, through your soul, being alive.

Then sit and have some water, coffee, or tea, reflecting on these moments. Think about the prayers that were said, Shma, hear and do!

Meditate on these meanings in life. While the Shalom, the peace, rests upon your being.

These are the days spoken of, in the ancient prophecies.

The biggest sign has now been seen on the same holy land again.

Go to Galilee!

There you will see.

It doesn't matter about negative experiences based on your religious past, what you may have been told, or misinformed beliefs.

Move away from the crowds, the noise, and into the sounds of nature all around.

You will find your answers there.

These help your soul absorb the revelation that is waiting for you. Imagine what it will do for you, and others too, when you begin to receive.

In Galilee, see the morning sun and the moon at night.

Feel the Ru'ach, the Spirit, the wind. Breathe in.

Let your hands and feet touch the land and foliage.

Immersed in living water, moving through the lake, the river, the springs.

The refreshment of soul, that calls you from afar, and waited for you all of these years.

Go to Galilee!

There you will see.

7. The Journey For Which You Are Called

I saw the vision again.

So, I think the time is near.

I do not have fear.

I only hope I am able to do the work I feel called to do.

So much time, decades of study, sleepless nights.

Yet here I am.

Now, at this appointed time.

Hopefully things will be alright, but I know that the true soul has its job, with challenges and issues to work through.

Do not cry, neither will I.

All is in the hand of our Father.

We do not know sometimes what we will find when we begin our journey.

Are we prepared for what will be or the things we will see, when we are walking through the wilderness?

When the path appears and becomes clear, we must walk, crawl or fly if we can, but we can not stand still too long.

Pray, meditate, build the power of your soul, as you step out and complete this part of your journey.

The journey for which you are called.

8. A Ladder In The Wilderness

In the darkness of the night, I contemplated the next steps of my journey.
Lying there upon the desert, a stone for my pillow as a stage for my dreams.

My eyes beheld the galaxies above my head.

A ladder in the wilderness appeared.

Above me the Spheres, with the Light of the Creator standing near.

I heard the words spoken so clear.

“In your journeys my son, I am with you.

I will bless you, and I am forever with your children.”

Through the brightness, as I opened my eyes, I saw the angels, descending
and ascending

from a stairway of my soul.

From formless to form, from lower to upper worlds.

I know this is a holy place indeed.

9. Tower Builders And People Of The Sky

The Tower Builders of Babel proclaimed they'd make a name for themselves that would endure for all of time.

Selfishly, in contempt, they used the Name of the Holy One as they declared the end justifies their means.

Palaces of gold and marble, concrete and steel of the greatest design.

Surely nothing could stop their dreams.

Until visited by messengers who, with the power of Heaven, disagreed.

Casting confusion upon their communication.

So, even with the same vision, when speaking the same language, their grand plans could not succeed.

Now among us are those of similar spirit who envision their own great designs.

Those who build towers of digital culture, that will stand the tests of time lasting into eternity.

All rattling their swords in might, none will challenge them, they are beyond defeat.

Nations come together to join the Assyrians and the Persians, the Romans and the Greeks.

Society masses at the foot of their tower, powered by greed.

People speak in the same voice but no one communicates beyond the static sound of hopeless words and empty dreams.

The original tower builders left the stage, as Abraham's family arrived.

With a desire to sanctify the holy Name, and covenant bonds, unto to the end of days, as People of the Sky.

In unity of spirit they join the One.

Although scattered by the wind, like seeds upon this dark world's rocky ground, heaven their roof, the Creator their shelter.

Come together as collected pages of the Book.

The time of Abraham seems so long ago, four thousand years!

How does that have anything to do with today?

How could it possibly have anything to do with me?

The people of the Sky remain, while the Tower builders are gone.

The fruit of good and evil sampled, until this eleventh hour, now each soul must decide to be named among the long-forgotten Tower Builders or united in Abraham's covenant with the People of the Sky.

10. Armageddon Only 20 Miles Away

Desolate Megiddo, a place where no one wants to be.

Vicious rulers have been laid waste there.

While all that remains are broken stones and dry bones of both man and beast.

Where Ahab and his Jezebel queen watched fire fall upon Mount Carmel, as the sun set into the Mediterranean Sea.

Cigar smoke from generals of war burns your eyes as it blows in from the east.

We now contemplate a kind of world-war party.

Soldiers marching with national pride, as their boots stomp down and their rockets land, upon the ground of this Holy Land.

With Armageddon only 20 miles away.

Smiling faces of those who promote and prosper from death, speak through the voices of the leaders of this world, as they call down from on high.

They say "We don't care that they began the wars you've won, give up your strategic land or die!"

Mighty nations signing bloody proclamations, as they scream their only desire is peace!

They conveniently ignore the promise of holy war, by the terrorists they harbor, waiting in the shadows for the children of Israel to sleep.

Only the covenant words of the Holy One, stand between the fire and bloodshed they seek,

and Armageddon only 20 miles away.

The prophets spoke of Messiah's promise before 6000 years, and destruction in the end of days.

Nations of this world have received great spiritual gifts from the People of the Book.

Those of faith remember the Creator's words.

"I will bless those who bless you",

Those who curse you shall surely pass away.
All the world so greatly troubled about a single thread from Adam, abandoned by the nations, those who curse the Chosen,
with Armageddon only 20 miles away.
From the gates of Jerusalem, it's difficult to comprehend.
Where are the prayers of the faithful or the helping hand of a friend?
When kindness is so greatly needed.
Instead it seems, the soul gets distracted watching news entertainment tv.
Becoming comfortable just doing nothing,
Unable to think of a single good word to say.
It is whispered "everyone can find the truth."
Yet it is rejected while the spirit is lost in silence.
I will tell you, you will find yourself standing alone, when all you want to do is the right thing.
It seems a strange thing, making plans for our children's future,
with Armageddon only 20 miles away.

11. The Satan Whispers

The satan comes to kill, steal and destroy.

She whispers, “Hey, did you hear?”

He did this, she did that, they did things I can’t repeat, things you don’t even want to hear.”

She appears so sincere, like a mother singing lullabies to a baby.

Who would question such integrity?

But her lies are smooth as the serpent, more deadly than the great beast.

Within her words are sweet poison for which, when ingested, there is no antidote for body, mind or soul.

The dragon looks you dead in the eyes with a smile, as you are seduced by her lies.

Breaking, even if possible, the ties that bind a child to the father.

If you do not listen or your allegiance is in question, she screams.

Even little things she says infiltrate your waking hours and corrupt your dreams.

Things so impossible, they seem to sound unreal, surreal and untrue.

So, the awareness of your soul asks a question pointed back at you.

Will the intended deception continue or end, once you hear her sweet whispers in your ear?

You wonder, what if the lies were not about him, her or them?

What if she were whispering things about me?

Beware of the satan.

She comes like an angel in the night but, like a serpent, just one little bite, and the soul begins to die, with such harmless-enough words,

“Hey did you hear?”

12. Wilderness Of Soul

The evil inclination, given full reign, begins to dominate the soul on a spiritual auto-pilot.

Your eyes glass-over, almost unaware of the changes.

Those moments when the light begins to leave, and darkness slowly begins to fill.

So undetectably smooth, from the conditioning you have been going through.

The shift has been rather painless.

It all seemed so innocent, as you waded, ankle deep, in the darker waters.

Then quite suddenly, you were all the way up to your neck.

Although you could barely feel a difference.

The voice of light calls from a distant place.

You almost do not hear it, as the water now rushes around your mouth, nose and ears.

Yet it is warm and inviting.

You look around one last time before being totally submerged.

Once below the depths, you see the world differently.

Everything seems so easy. It all makes so much sense now.

Why all of the fuss? You're alright, you feel fine.

At this moment, only an ancient Covenant between you and the Creator holds your life-giving molecules together.

Like an emergency underwater breathing apparatus with limited air supply, if not calculated to the most precise degree, all could be lost.

Any next move could be the last.

Fatality awaits if you don't rise above the surface, soon.

You are truly on borrowed time.

In distant memory you hear the words the Creator asked your grandfather, Adam.

"Where are you my child?"

His response, "I was afraid when I heard your voice, because I felt naked and exposed."

The Creator asked his son "Who told you, you were naked?"

But just now, the voices begin to fade away.

The light, no longer visible, is gone.

You are alone, immersed in the waters of darkness.

Fear overtakes your senses.

You feel the exposure of your soul's nakedness.

The light now seems so far away.

No longer a covering for you as it had been before.

You and the darkness become as one.

You want so desperately to breathe-in, but if you do, it will be your last, and it's all over spiritually.

These next moments are so crucial, there may be no turning back.

You call-out in panic. Where is the path?!

You are lost in the darkness. Then you scream!

There is nothing familiar you can recognize.

Even your own reflection sends chills through your being.

You call out. I am here! Help me to find the light!

You reach out in a terrified rage.

Asking yourself, How could this be?

I was only here for such a short time.

How did this happen to me?

The coldness sweeps in.

You are not sure if this is the last, or if anything can save you now?

You feel a terror come over you.

You don't want life to be over so quickly, and you don't want to feel this dread.

Emptiness replaces hope and replaced with hopelessly lost.

But in your darkest moments of fear, you see a faint reflection of light, glimmering through the surface, just above your head.

As you look up, you remember your direction.

It was just over there a bit.

You begin to move your hands and feet.

Yes, now I see it!

I can feel it!

I'm going to be okay.

Hope regained, you call-out, "I am here, please wait for me! I am on my way."

You rise above the darkness below.

You take a breath.

It is like a newborn, as if this were the first.

You call-out, "I can see now! I am alive, I can breathe!"

This perilous moment, escaped!

Elated but still shaking in fright.

You wonder, how could such a thing as this happen?

To feel so lost, in the dark, throughout the dead of night.

You determine, right then and there.

No longer will you let your soul run on auto-pilot, unaware, and let the evil inclination dominate your life.

You feel a great sense of comfort as you now crawl to the warmth of the light.

On any other day or time, you may not have found your way, and have been lost in darkness.

While wondering in the wilderness of soul.

13. This Hope Sustains Me

From my bomb shelter I write.

I have been through the wilderness.

My mouth and nose have been filled with its dust and dirt.

I taste it in every breath.

I have slept on cold, hard stones under cloudy skies.

Although I dreamed of Jacob's ladder, I opened my eyes to see Orion looking back at me.

I asked myself, where am I, where is me?

Visions of the sandy place I used to sit by the creek, praying that God would show me the way, and I would see it.

Oh, but in those streams of water and my dreams, I saw things that could only be understood by the wise, when I was only fifteen.

Decades later, I seek the shade of a tree.

I feel like Jonah having taken the boat in some other direction, than where I should be,

but here I am, here is me.

Wind blowing past my face, my sight lost to the elements and my voice fading with every heart beat.

But I am not Jonah, and I can no longer be Job.

I step forward, once more on this wilderness road and I feel my way, with my staff in my hand.

Not the rod of Moses, but more the necessity of an aging man.

Yet still determined to see God at the end of my journey, may it be a long ways away, before that day.

No, I do not succumb to the pain and the fear that accompany me through the wilderness.

For on the other side, I know the Jordan is only twenty four miles away.

The promised land is before me, no matter if I have to walk slowly or even crawl, I will find my rest there.

On the other side, from where those visions of my youth came.

There I'll stay.

For these final steps in shoes old and worn, I walk this wilderness today.

The great God of Abraham has watched over me,

I know I will once again stand at the holy Temple grounds and pray.

May I see the face of Moshiach in my days.

This hope sustains me.

14. I Remember My Prayers

I remember when we used to walk by the creek, Your poetry would speak to me.

We listened to the birds singing in the trees, bamboo swayed softly in the breeze.

It was the two of us, You and me, and there we were with no one else around.

The sound of water as it flowed by, the view of the sun in the sky.

I knew my life had changed forever.

I sang my songs and played guitar as we walked along the roads there in that forest so far away.

Our journey has continued such a long time and here we are now, You and I.

A smile comes to my face when I feel the happiness I have known all of these years.

You and I are here together still.

Thank You for Your love, thank You for the peace You have given, I am thankful for our time.

Through time, memories of these moments with You.

I remember my prayers.

Acknowledgements

This book was only possible because of my wife, Corinne.

Thank you to my mother, Carol, who loves me, prays for me and has helped me so much.

Thank you to Rabbi Walter, you are a great blessing to me.

Some of the poems were inspired by the 18th Century Rabbi, the Ramchal, in his book Derek HaShem, The Path Of God.

To the reader, if you fall down, get back up.

Perhaps we'll meet in Haifa, Karmiel or Tzfat, if not, I'll see you in the City of the Great King.

Valentene in Galilee

Glossary

Adonai = Lord (as in God)

Ahad = One (as in Unity)

Greatest Commandment = Duet. 6:4-9

Master = my Teacher, my Rabbi

Megiddo = Har Megiddo (Har means hill), also known as Armageddon (Rev. 16:16)

Moshiach = Messiah, literally anointed with oil, anointed one

Observant = Orthodox

Olam Ha'Ba = The World-To-Come, Heaven

Ru'ach = wind, spirit

Shadai = Name of God (used by Abraham)

Shalom = Peace

Shma = Hear, listen (as in prayers)

Spheres = a reference to The Tree Of Life seen in the star patterns

Tefillin = Covenant sign, leather straps with small boxed scrolls, wrapped on the forearm and forehead

Tzadek = Righteous man

Va'Ahaftah = ...and you will love...



About the Author

Valentene Rice was born in Houston, Texas and became a professional artist in 1992. Valentene moved to Israel in 2014, and in 2015 he was officially recognized as an Israeli Artist by the Israeli Art Commission. Valentene lives, paints, and writes poetry in Galilee. Valentene's works are of nature and the elements of beauty which surrounds us in life.

Read more at <https://www.valentene.com>.

